Medieval Weapons Glossary

SwordsKnivesandDaggers.com knows that a lot of our customers are Medieval and Renaissance enthusiasts. We've assembled this glossary of Medieval weapon terms for all you knights and knaves out there.

AXES

Battleaxe
Designed to cut legs and arms, the battleaxe has a narrow, slicing blade resulting in deep and terrible wounds. Relatively lightweight (compared to modern splitting axes), they were quick in combat. The handles were often reinforced with metal bands to preventing breaking by the enemy. While mounted knights and nobility came to favor swords and armor, they were not impervious to the effect of a well-placed axe stroke. By concentrating the weight in the wedge of the axe head, a battleaxe could crush through armor and easily cut flesh.

Doloire
This type of axe is sometimes called a Wagoner's Axe. It is known that axes of this type were carried with the wagon trains supporting medieval and Renaissance armies. It was probably used as both a tool and a weapon and many are found in various armories around the world.

Francisca
The francisca or francesca is a throwing axe that was used as a weapon by the early Franks, among whom it was a characteristic national weapon until around the middle of the 8th century. The francisca is characterized by its distinctly arch-shaped head, widening toward the cutting edge and terminating in a prominent point at both the upper and lower corners.

Halberd
A halberd (also called halbert or Swiss voulge) is a two-handed pole weapon that came to prominent use during the 14th and 15th centuries. The halberd consists of an axe blade topped with a spike mounted on a long shaft. It always has a hook or thorn on the back side of the axe blade for grappling mounted combatants.

Lochaber Axe
The Lochaber axe was a Scottish war axe that came into use around 1600. The name of the weapon derives from Lochaber, an area in the western Scottish Highlands, as the weapon was employed principally by the Scottish highlanders, who (generally without any cavalry of their own) required armament against cavalry.

Mattock
A mattock is a hand tool, distinguished by the head, which makes it particularly suitable for digging or breaking up moderately hard ground. A mattock has a broad chisel-like blade perpendicular to the handle. During the Middle Ages of Europe, the mattock served as an improvised pole weapon for the poorer classes.

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DAGGERS and KNIVES

Anelace
An anelace, also called an anlace, is typically regarded as a medieval long dagger. However, some sources treat it as a type of sword. An anelace was sharp on both sides and could be carried at the small of the back or girdle. Two anelaces could be used in a paired fighting style similar to using a sword and parrying dagger.

Baselard
The baselard or Swiss dagger (Schweizerdegen) is a historical Swiss blade weapon with a crescent-shaped pommel and crossguard. The baselard's characteristic hilt features a crescent-shaped pommel and crossguard.Their blade was characteristically double edged, tapering to a point and was, on earlier examples,

sometimes diamond shape in cross-section. This form would lend a great deal of strength to the blade, especially useful for piercing armor.

Cinquedea

The Cinquedea is a civilian short sword (or long dagger). It was developed in northern Italy and enjoyed a period of popularity during the Italian renaissance of the 15th and early 16th centuries.The name means "five fingers", and it describes the width of the blade next to the guard. The blade was heavy, about 45cm in length, and tapered to a somewhat rounded point. The grip was simple with a small pommel, and the guard was curved with the concave side toward the point. There were typically several furrows along the wider sides of the blade to lighten the weapon. The wide blade was useful for decorative etching. This weapon was varied in size, being anywhere in size from 10" to 28". The cinquedea was used primarily as a thrusting weapon. It was carried horizontally next to the buttocks so that it could be drawn laterally from the back.

Dirk

Dirk is a Scots word for a long dagger; sometimes a cut-down sword blade mounted on a dagger hilt, rather than a knife blade. In Bronze Age and Iron Age Scotland and Ireland, the dirk was actually considered to be a sword. Its blade length and style varied, but it was generally 7-14 inches. Scottish Dirks can range from less than 6 inches to around 20-25 inches. However, the blades of Irish versions often were as much as 21 inches in length.

Ear Dagger

An Ear dagger is a relatively rare and exotic form of dagger that was used during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Ear daggers have a peculiar-looking hilt with two protrusions of the grip instead of a pommel, in some cases not unlike a human ear. Ear daggers frequently have a single sharpened edge that ends in an acute point.

Great Knife or Hiebmesser

A great knife or Hiebmesser was a type of German single-edged weapon, similar to a falchion. Much less expensive than other types of available swords, it was the weapon of the common man. Used for menial work in addition to battle, the great knife sported a blade with a single curved edge that led to a clipped-back tip. Its hilt included a straight cross-guard and Nagel (a nail-like protrusion that juts out from the right side of the cross-guard away from the flat of the blade) to protect the wielder's hands.

Misericorde

A misericorde (also known as mercygiver) was a long, narrow knife, used in medieval times to deliver the death stroke (the mercy stroke, hence the name of the blade, derived from the Latin misericordia "mercy") to a seriously wounded knight. The blade was thin enough so that it could strike through the gaps between armour plates.This weapon could be used to dispatch knights who had received mortal wounds, which were not always quickly fatal in the age of bladed combat; it could also be used as a means of killing an active adversary, as during a grappling struggle. The blade could be used against an opponent's face, or thrust through holes or weak points in armor, such as under the arm, with the aim of piercing the heart.

Parrying Dagger

The parrying dagger is a category of small hand-held weapons from the European late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. These weapons were used as off-hand weapons in conjunction with a single-handed sword. As the name implies they were designed to parry, or defend, more effectively than a simple dagger form, typically incorporating a wider guard, and often some other defensive features to better protect the hand, as well.

Poniard

A poniard is a form of dagger with a slim square or triangular blade. It was primarily used for stabbing in close quarters or in conjunction with a rapier. The poniard is almost identical to the dirk. Shorter than a short sword and longer than a dagger, this blade is used more as a decorative weapon than for practical use.

Rondel

A rondel was a type of stiff-bladed dagger in Europe in the late Middle Ages (from the 14th century onwards), used by a variety of people from merchants to knights. It was worn at the waist and might be used as a utility tool, or worn into battle or a jousting tournament as a side-arm. The blade was typically long and slim, measuring 12 inches (30 cm) or more; the whole dagger might be as long as 20 inches (50 cm). Rondel means round or circular; the dagger gets its name from its round (or similarly shaped, e.g. octagonal) hand guard and round or spherical pommel (knob on the end of the grip). The blade was stiff, made from steel, and the tang extended through the handle, which was cylindrical, normally carved wood or bone. In profile, the blade was usually diamond-shaped, lenticular, or triangular.

Seax

A Seax (also Hadseax, Sax, Seaxe, Scramaseax and Scramsax), was a type of Germanic single-edged knife. Seax seem to have been used primarily as a tool but may also have been a weapon in extreme situations. They

range in size from 7.5cm to 75cm. The larger ones (langseax) were probably weapons, the smaller ones (hadseax) tools, intermediate sized ones serving a dual purpose.

SWORDS

Broadsword
The term broadsword is used to refer to different types of swords, across many cultures and time periods. During the 17th through 19th centuries, the term was used in Europe as a name for a specific design of sword, namely a straight-bladed, double-edged, basket-hilted sword like the Italian schiavona or the Scottish claymore (which has been used to describe both basket-hilted blades and the more popular greatsword). These swords were used for their slashing and crushing ability as well as their easiness to make/fashion.

Claymore
The two-handed, used by the Highlanders of Scotland, was a large sword in the Medieval period used in the constant clan warfare and border fights with the English from circa 1500 to 1700. The average claymore ran about 55" in overall length, with a 13" grip, 42" blade, and a weight of approximately 5.5 lbs.

Falchion
A falchion is a one-handed, single-edged sword of European origin, whose design is reminiscent of the Persian scimitar and the Chinese dao. The weapon combined the weight and power of an axe with the versatility of a sword. Falchions are found in different forms from around the 11th century up to and including the sixteenth century. The blade designs of falchions varied wildly across the continent and through the ages. They almost always included a single edge with a slight curve on the blade towards the point on the end; they also were affixed with a quilloned crossguard for the hilt in the manner of the contemporary long-swords.

Flamberge
The flamberge is a flame-bladed sword or wave-bladed sword has a characteristicly undulating style of blade. The wave in the blade is often considered to contribute a flame-like quality to the appearance of a sword. While largely decorative, some attributes of the waved blade were useful in combat.

Longsword
The Longsword is a type of European sword used during the late medieval and Renaissance periods, approximately 1350 to 1550 (with early and late use reaching into the 13th and 17th centuries, respectively). Longswords have lengthy cruciform hilts with grips that provided room for two hands and straight double-edged blades. Longswords are used for striking, cutting, and thrusting.

Rapier
A rapier is a relatively slender, sharply pointed sword, used mainly for thrusting attacks, mainly in use in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. Rapiers have a relatively long blade witha complex hilt constructed to provide protection for the hand wielding it. While the blade might be broad enough to cut to some degree (but nowhere near that of the thicker, heavier swords in use around the Middle Ages), the strength of the rapier is its ability as a thrusting weapon.

Sabre
The sabre or saber (see spelling differences) traces its origins to the European backsword and usually but not always has a curved, single-edged blade and a rather large hand guard, covering the knuckles of the hand as well as the thumb and forefinger.

Shortsword
Shortsword refers to a sword shorter than the "standard" ones but yet longer than a dagger. It is a modern term.

SPEARS and other POLEARMS

Bill
The bill was a polearm used by infantry in Europe in the Viking Age by Vikings and Anglo-Saxons as well as in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. It was a national weapon of the English, but was also common elsewhere, especially in Italy. Derived originally from the agricultural billhook, the bill consisted of a hooked chopping blade with several pointed projections mounted on a staff. The end of the cutting blade curves forward to form a hook, which is the bill's distinguishing characteristic. In addition, the blade almost universally had one pronounced spike straight off the top like a spear head, and also a hook or spike mounted on the 'reverse' side of the blade.

Glaive

A glaive is a polearm consisting of a single-edged blade on the end of a pole. The blade is affixed in a socket-shaft configuration similar to an axe head. Typically, the blade was around 18 inches long, on the end of a pole 6 or 7 feet long. Occasionally glaive blades were created with a small hook on the reverse side to better catch riders. Such blades are called glaive-guisarmes.

Guisarme

A guisarme (sometimes gisarme or bisarme) was a pole weapon used in Europe primarily between 1000-1400. It was used primarily to dismount knights and horsemen. Like most polearms it was developed by peasants by combining hand tools with long poles: in this case by putting a pruning hook onto a spear shaft. While hooks are fine for dismounting horsemen from mounts, they lack the stopping power of a spear especially when dealing with static opponents.

Lance

The term lance has become a catchall for a variety of different pole weapons based on the spear. While it could still be generally classified as a spear, the lance tends to be larger - usually both longer and stouter and thus also considerably heavier, and unsuited for throwing, or for the rapid thrusting, as with an infantry spear. Lances did not have spear tips that (intentionally) broke off or bent, unlike many throwing weapons of the spear/javelin family, and were adapted for mounted combat. They were often equipped with a vamplate, a small circular plate to prevent the hand sliding up the shaft upon impact. Though perhaps most known as one of the foremost military and sporting weapons used by European knights, the use of lances was spread throughout the Old World wherever mounts were available. As a secondary weapon, lancers of the period also bore swords, maces or something else suited to close quarter battle, since the lance was often a one-use-per-engagement weapon; after the initial charge, the weapon was far too long, heavy and slow to be effectively used against opponents in a melee.

Military Fork

A military fork is a pole weapon which was used in war in Europe between the 15th and 19th centuries. Like many polearms, the military fork traces its lineage to an agricultural tool,and military in this case the pitchfork. Unlike a trident used for fishing, the military fork was rarely barbed and normally only consisted of two tines (prongs) which were straight compared to the original pitchfork. The pair of tines usually ran parallel or slightly flared. In certain parts of Europe this became the favored polearm, especially during castle sieges. A fork could be used to dismount a rider, but it could also help in building siege ladders and in raising supplies to ramparts. Italy, France and Germany were particularly known for the use of military forks.

Partisan

A partisan (also partizan) is a type of polearm that was used in Europe during medieval times. It consisted of a spearhead mounted on a long shaft (usually made of wood) with protrusions on the sides, which aided in the user in parrying sword thrusts.

Pike

A pike is a pole weapon, a very long thrusting spear used two-handed and used extensively by infantry both for attacks on enemy foot soldiers and as a counter-measure against cavalry assaults. Unlike many similar weapons, the pike is not intended to be thrown. Pikes were used by European troops from the early Middle Ages until around 1700, wielded by foot soldiers deployed in close order. The pike was an extremely long weapon, usually 10 to 14 feet long. It had a wooden shaft with an iron or steel spearhead affixed.

Planson

The planson or placon a picot is a type of a Medieval infantry weapon designed for smashing and thrusting. It consists of a stout iron-shod baseball-bat-like shaft (length 1-1.5 m) and a steel spike attached on top. It was cheap and easy to make, and was extremely efficient on heavily armoured opponents, as it would be easily driven through armor.

Ranseur

A ranseur was a type of polearm used across Europe up to the 15th century. The head of a ranseur was composed of a spear-tip affixed with a cross hilt at its base. Often this hilt was crescent-shaped, giving it an appearance similar to that of a trident. Generally, the hilts did not have a cutting edge, unlike the double-edged partisan. Ranseurs are generally 6 feet or longer. The spearing function of the weapon is apparent, and the deflection includes the trapping of opponent weapons in the space below the main blade, where a twist of the shaft would apply pressure from it or the secondary projections to either break the caught weapon or disarm its wielder. Additionally, the side projections provide both a means of holding an opponent at long range or of pulling mounted opponents off their horse.

Spetum

A spetum was a pole weapon of Europe during the 13th century. It consisted of a long pole some 6-8 feet long

which was mounted with a spear head with two projections at its base. The design of a spetum is very efficient for combat. The main blade is long enough to destroy any significant organ in the human body with one quick thrust. The blunt backs of the side blades make the spetum extremely useful for a variety of uses such as tripping and knocking aside shields, but more importantly they provide far more strength to the sharpened side and points than is possible with any dual-edged construction. The sharpened front ends are useful for piercing or chopping in situations where precision is difficult.

Voulge

A voulge (occasionally called a pole cleaver) is a type of polearm that existed alongside the similar glaive in medieval Europe. Superficially, a voulge might strongly resemble a glaive, but there are some notable differences in construction. First, the attachment of the voulge blade to the shaft was usually done by binding the lower two thirds of the blade to the side of the pole; the glaive would often have a socket built into the blade itself and was mounted on top of the pole. In addition, while both had curved blades, that of the voulge was broad and meant for hacking, while that of the glaive was narrow and meant more for cutting. Indeed, a voulge looks something like a squashed bardiche head, or just a meat cleaver attached to a long pole.

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BLUNT WEAPONS

Bec de Corbin

A bec de corbin is a type of pole weapon that was popular in medieval Europe. The name is old French for "crow's beak". Similar to the Lucerne hammer, it consists of a modified hammer's head and spike mounted atop a long pole. Unlike the Lucerne hammer, the bec de corbin was used primarily with the 'beak' or fluke to attack instead of the hammer head. The hammer face balancing the beak was often blunt instead of the multi-pronged Lucerne, and the beak tended to be stouter; better designed for tearing armor. Also, the spike mounted on the top of head was not nearly as long and thin as in the Lucerne. Bec de Corbin occasionally becomes a catchall for any type of warhammer, such as a maul or a horseman's pick.

Flail

The flail is a medieval weapon made of one (or more) weights attached to a handle with a hinge or chain. There is some disagreement over the names for this weapon; the terms "morning star", and even "mace" are variously applied, though these are used to describe other weapons, which are very different in usage from a weapon with a hinge or chain, commonly used in Europe from the 13th century to the 15th century. In construction, the morning star and flail have similar, if not identical, spiked heads.

Flanged Mace

What makes a flanged mace different from other maces is the flanges, protruding edges of metal that allow it to dent or penetrate even the thickest armor.

Mace

A mace is a simple weapon that uses a heavy head on the end of a handle to deliver powerful blows. A development of the club, a mace differs from a hammer in that the head of a mace is radially symmetric so that a blow can be delivered equally effectively with any side of the head. A mace consists of a strong, heavy wooden, metal-reinforced, or metal shaft, with a head made of stone, copper, bronze, iron or steel. During the Middle Ages metal armour and chain mail protected against the blows of edged weapons and blocked arrows and other projectiles. Solid metal maces and war hammers proved able to inflict damage on well armoured knights, as the force of a blow from a mace is large enough to cause damage without penetrating the armour.

Morning Star

The morning star is a medieval weapon consisting of a spiked club resembling a mace, usually with a long spike extending straight from the top and many smaller spikes around the particle of the head. The spikes distinguish it from a mace, which can have, at most, flanges or small knobs.

Quarterstaff

A quarterstaff is a medieval English weapon, consisting of a shaft of hardwood, sometimes with metal-reinforced tips. The quarterstaff is effectively a long two-handed club, although its weight distribution is generally even throughout its entire length (some forms did have weighted tips, however). It was used both to deliver crushing blows, and to thrust like a spear. The art of using the staff was closely related to that of other polearms, and it was often employed as a training weapon for the latter. Moves include many different forms of blocks, thrusts, strikes, and sweeps.

War Hammer

A war hammer is a late medieval weapon of war intended for close combat, the design of which resembles the hammer. The war hammer consists of a handle and a head. The handle may be of different lengths, the longest

being roughly equivalent to the halberd, and the shortest about the same as a mace. Long war hammers were pole weapons (polearms) meant for use against riders, whereas short ones were used in closer quarters and from horseback. Later war hammers often had a spike on one side of the head, thus making it a more versatile weapon. War hammers were developed as a consequence of the ever more prevalent metal armors of the medieval battlefields during the 14th and 15th centuries.

RANGED and SIEGE WEAPONS

Arbalest
The arbalest (also arblast) was a late variation of the medieval European crossbow. A larger weapon, the arbalest had a steel prod ("bow"). Since an arbalest was much larger than earlier crossbows, and because of the greater tensile strength of steel, it had a greater force. A skilled arbalestier (arblaster) could shoot two bolts per minute. Arbalests were sometimes considered inhumane or unfair weapons, since an inexperienced crossbowman could use one to kill a knight who had a lifetime of training.

Battering Ram
A battering ram is a siege engine originating in ancient times to break open fortification walls or doors.

Ballista
Developed by the Greeks and Romans, the ballista faded from popular use in the Middle Ages with the advent of the trebuchet and mangonel in siege warfare. The crossbow and eventually the longbow supplanted it as sniper weapon. They all were simpler to make, easier to maintain (no anointment) and much cheaper.

Bombard
A bombard is a type of medieval cannon or mortar, used chiefly in sieges for throwing heavy stone balls. This weapon was usually used during sieges to hurl various forms of missile into enemy fortifications. Projectiles such as stone or metal balls, burning materials and weighted cloth soaked in quicklime or Greek fire are documented.

Catapult
In the Medieval times, when the trebuchet was introduced a relatively short time before the advent of gunpowder, the catapult became basically obsolete. Cannons soon replaced catapults as the standard siege weapon in Europe in the 14th century. During this period, catapults and related siege machines were the first weapons used for biological warfare. The carcasses of diseased animals or even diseased humans, usually those who had perished from the Black Death, were loaded onto the catapult and then thrown over the castle's walls to infect those barricaded inside. More commonly, incendiary missiles were thrown.

Culverin
A culverin was a simple ancestor of the musket, and later a medieval cannon of relatively long barrel and light construction that fired solid round shot projectiles with a high muzzle velocity, giving a relatively long range and flat trajectory. Round shot refers to the classic solid spherical cannonball. The culverin was adapted for use by the French in the 15th century, and later adapted for naval use by the English in the late 16th century. The culverin was used to bombard targets from a distance.

English Longbow
The English longbow, also called the Welsh longbow, was a powerful type of medieval longbow (a tall bow for archery) about 6 ft 6 in (2.0 m) long used by the English, Scots and Welsh, both for hunting and as a weapon in medieval warfare. In the Middle Ages the Welsh and the English were famous for their very heavy, long-ranged English longbows, used to great effect in the civil wars of the period and against the French in the Hundred Years' War (with notable success at the battles of Crécy (1346), Poitiers (1356) and Agincourt (1415)).

Mangonel
A 'mangonel was a type of catapult or siege machine used in the medieval period to throw projectiles at a castle's walls. The mangonel had poorer accuracy than a trebuchet (which was introduced later, shortly before the discovery and widespread usage of gunpowder). The mangonel threw projectiles on a lower trajectory and at a higher velocity than the trebuchet with the intention of destroying walls, rather than hurling projectiles over them. It was more suited to field battles. Mangonels shot heavy projectiles from a bowl-shaped bucket at the end of the arm. The bucket could launch more rocks than a sling; this made it different from an onager. In combat, mangonels hurled rocks, burning objects (fire pots, vessels filled with flammable materials that created a fireball on impact), or anything else readily available to the attacking and defending forces.

Onager
The onager was a post-classical Roman siege engine, which derived its name from the kicking action of the machine, similar to that of an onager (wild ass). It is a type of catapult that uses torsional pressure, generally from twisted rope, to store energy for the shot. In the Middle Ages (recorded from around 1200) a less powerful version of the onager was used that held the projectile in a fixed bowl instead of a sling. This was so that many

small projectiles could be thrown, as opposed to one large one.

Petrary
Petrary is a generic term for a medieval stone-throwing siege engine (from the Latin petrus, - stone), used to hurl large rocks against the walls of the besieged city, in an attempt to break down the wall and create an entry point. They were also used to throw dead animals into the confined area of the city, in order to spread disease. Petraries can be either gravity operated, where a large counterweight drops to propel the missile, or tension operated, where the throwing arm is pulled back against twisted rope or animal sinew, which then provides the power when released. Catapult, trebuchet, mangonel are all types of petrary, but ballista style armaments, which fired bolts or arrows, would not fit into this category.

Petard
A petard was a medieval small bomb used to blow up gates and walls when breaching fortifications. In a typical implementation, it was commonly either a conical or rectangular metal object containing 5 or 6 pounds of gun powder, activated with a slow match used as a fuse. It was often placed either inside tunnels under walls, or directly upon gates. When placed inside a tunnel under a wall and exploded, large amounts of air would often be released from the tunnel, as the tunnel collapsed. By securing the device firmly to the gate, the shape of the device allows the concussive pressure of the blast to be applied entirely towards the destruction of the gate.

Seige Engine
A siege engine is a device that is designed to break or circumvent city walls and other fortifications in siege warfare. Medieval designs include the catapult (including the Mangonel and Onager), the ballista and the trebuchet (the trebuchet was first designed in China in the 3rd century BC and was brought over to Europe in the 4th century AD). These machines used mechanical energy to fling large projectiles to batter down stone walls.

Siege Hook
A siege hook is a weapon used to pull stones from a wall during a siege.

Siege Tower
A siege tower (or in the Middle Ages a belfry) is a specialized siege engine, constructed to protect assailants and ladders while approaching the defensive walls of a fortification. The tower was often rectangular with four wheels and a height roughly equal to that of the wall or sometimes higher to allow archers to stand on top of the tower and fire into the fortification. Because the towers were wooden and thus flammable, they had to have some non-flammable covering of iron or fresh animal skins.[1] The siege tower was mainly made from wood but sometimes they had metal parts.

Trebuchet
A trebuchet[1] or trebucket[2] is a siege engine that was employed in the Middle Ages either to smash masonry walls or to throw projectiles over them. It is sometimes called a "counterweight trebuchet" or "counterpoise trebuchet" in order to distinguish it from an earlier weapon that has come to be called the "traction trebuchet", though this is redundant. The counterweight trebuchet appeared in both Christian and Muslim lands around the Mediterranean in the twelfth century. It could fling three-hundred-pound (140 kg) projectiles at high speeds into enemy fortifications. On occasion, disease-infected corpses were flung into cities in an attempt to infect the people under siege—a medieval variant of biological warfare. With the introduction of gunpowder, the trebuchet lost its place as the siege engine of choice to the cannon.

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ARMOR
While armour is not technically a weapon, its development was both driven by weapon technology and a driving force for that same technology in return.

Bevor
A bevor is a piece of plate armour designed to protect the neck, much like a gorget. A bevor can be made of a single solid piece or multiple articulated lamés around the neck and chin. The bevor was typically worn in conjunction with a sallet, and later with a burgonet, in a form known as a falling buffe. In both cases the two pieces of armour combined to provide protection for the whole of the head and neck.

Bracer
A bracer (or arm-guard) is a strap or sheath, commonly made of leather, stone, or plastic that covers the inside of an archer's arm to protect it while shooting. Bracers keep the inside of the archer's forearm from getting hurt by the string of the bow or the fletching of the arrow; they also prevent loose clothing from catching the bow string. They normally cover the forearm only.

Brigandine

A brigandine, a form of body armour, is a cloth garment, generally canvas or leather, lined with small oblong steel plates riveted to the fabric. Brigandines were essentially a refinement of the earlier coat of plates, which developed in the late 12th century and typically were of simpler construction and used larger plates. Brigandines first appeared towards the end of the 14th century, but survived beyond this transitional period between mail and plate, and came into wide use in the 15th century, remaining in use well into the 16th. 15th century brigandines are generally front-opening garments with the nails arranged in triangular groups of three, while 16th century brigandines generally have smaller plates with the rivets arranged in rows. It was commonly worn over a gambeson and mail shirt and it was not long before this form of protection was commonly used by soldiers ranging in rank from archers to knights. It was most commonly used by Men-at-arms.

Chain Mail
Mail (also maille, often given as chain mail or chain maille) is a type of armour or jewelry that consists of small metal rings linked together in a pattern to form a mesh. Mail armour provided a highly effective defense against the weapons of the Medieval Period. Tests conducted by the Royal Armoury at Leeds concluded that, "it is almost impossible to penetrate using any conventional medieval weapon." This construction can ward off a slashing blow by an edged weapon and penetration by thrusting and piercing weapons, preventing the point from cutting through to the skin. The flexibility of mail meant that a blow would often injure the wearer, potentially causing fractures or serious bruising. It is to be considered however, that most Medieval physicians and physicians of earlier time periods could usually set broken bones, and the mail prevented more serious, infection-prone injuries. However, fractures and extensive bruising did kill warriors as well. The word chainmail is of relatively recent coinage, having been in use only since the 1700s, prior to this it was referred to simply as mail.

Coat of Plates
A coat of plates (also known in the European Middle Ages as a pair of plates)is a form of torso armour consisting of metal plates sewn or riveted to a cloth or leather backing. The plates number anywhere from eight or ten to the hundreds depending on their size. The coat of plates makes a fairly brief appearance in the history of European armour during the era of transitional armour, during a portion of the 14th century. The coat of plates was normally worn with a mail hauberk, a helmet of either the bascinet or great helm style (or both).

Couter
The couter is the defense for the elbow in a piece of plate armour. Initially just a curved piece of metal, as plate armor progressed the couter became an articulated joint.

Cuirass
Cuirass (French cuirasse, Latin coriaceus, made of leather, from corium, the original breastplate being of leather), the plate armour, is formed of a single piece of metal or other rigid material or composed of two or more pieces, which covers the front of the wearer's person. In a suit of armour, however, since this important piece was generally worn in connection with a corresponding defence for the back, the term cuirass commonly is understood to imply the complete body-armour, including both the breast and the back plates. Thus this complete body armour appears in the Middle Ages frequently to have been described as a pair of plates. Elizabeth I of England often wore a cuirass.

Cuisses
Cuisses are a form of medieval armor worn to protect the thigh. While the skirt of a maille shirt or tassets of a cuirass could protect the upper legs from above, a thrust from below could avoid these defenses. Thus, cuisses were worn on the thighs to protect from such blows. Padded Cuisses made in a similar way to a Gambeson were commonly worn by knights in the 12th and 13th centuries, usually over Chausses and may have had Poleyns directly attached to them.

Culet
A culet is a piece of plate armour consisting of small, horizontal lamés that protect the small of the back or the buttocks.

Fauld
Faulds are a piece of plate armour worn below a breastplate to protect the waist and hips. They take the form of bands of metal surrounding both legs, potentially surrounding the entire hips in a form similar to a skirt.

Gauntlet
Gauntlet is a name for several different styles of glove, particularly those with an extended cuff covering part of the forearm. Gauntlets exist in many forms, ranging from flexible fabric and leather gloves, to chainmail and fully-articulated plate armour. Historically, gauntlets were an important piece of armour, since the hands and arms were particularly vulnerable in hand-to-hand combat.

Gorget
A gorget originally was a steel collar designed to protect the throat. It was a feature of older types of armour and intended to protect against swords and other non-projectile weapons. Most Medieval versions of gorgets were

simple neck protectors that were worn under the breastplate and backplate set. These neck plates supported the weight of the armour worn over it, and many were equipped with straps for attaching the heavier armour plates.

Greave
A greave is a piece of armour that protects the leg. Often in matched pairs (a pair of greaves), greaves may be constructed of materials ranging from padded cloth to steel plate. Some designs protect only the lower leg (a half-greave) or extend upwards to protect the thigh. In the Middle Ages greaves eventually developed to protect the back of the legs as well and these were called full greaves (the style which only covered the front became known as half-greaves or demi-greaves).

Hauberk
A hauberk is a shirt of chain mail armour. The term is usually used to describe a shirt reaching at least to mid-thigh and including sleeves. Haubergeon ("little hauberk") generally refers to a shorter variant with partial sleeves, but the terms are often used interchangeably. Slits to accommodate horseback-riding are often incorporated below the waist. Most are put on over the head.

Helmet
A helmet is a form of protective gear worn on the head to protect it from injuries. The helm was a vital part of a medieval warrior's equipment, which protected the head from arrows and the deadly blow of the sword. Initially constructed of leather, the helmet eventually was made entirely from iron.

Pauldron
A pauldron (sometimes spelled pouldron or powldron) is a component of plate armour, which evolved from spaulders in the 15th century. As with spaulders, pauldrons cover the shoulder area. Pauldrons tend to be larger than spaulders, covering the armpit, and sometimes parts of the back and chest. Pauldrons typically consists of a single large dome-shaped piece to cover the shoulder (the "cop") with multiple lamés attached to it to defend the arm and upper shoulder. On armours designed for mounted combat, whether in the tournament or the field, the pauldrons would be usually be asymmetrical, with one pauldron sporting a cut-away to make room for a lance-rest.

Poleyn
The poleyn was a component of Medieval and Renaissance armor that protected the knee. During the transition from mail armor to plate armor, this was among the earliest plate components to develop. They first appeared in the mid-thirteenth century and remained in use until the early seventeenth century when firearms made them obsolete.

Shield
A shield is a protective device, meant to intercept attacks. In the early European Middle Ages kite shields were commonly used; these were rounded at the top and tapered at the bottom. They were easily used on horseback and allowed easier leg movement when dismounted. As personal body armour improved, knight's shields became smaller, leading to the familiar heater shield style. Both kite and heater style shields were made of several layers of laminated wood, with a gentle curve in cross section. The heater style inspired the shape of the symbolic heraldic shield that is still used today. Eventually, specialised shapes were developed such as the bouche — which had a lance rest cut into the upper corner of the lance side, to help guide it in combat or tournament.

Plate Armour
Plate armour is personal armour made from large metal plates, worn on the chest and sometimes the entire body. Single plates of metal armour were again used from the late 13th century on, to protect joints and shins, and these were worn over a full mail haubergeon. By the end of the 14th century, larger and complete full plates of armour had been developed. During the early 1500s the helmet and neckguard design was reformed to produce the so-called Nürnberg armour, many of them masterpieces of workmanship and design.

Sabaton
A Sabaton or solleret is part of a Knight's armour that covers the foot. Fifteenth century sabatons typically end in a tapered point well past the actual toes of the wearer's foot. Sabatons of the first half of sixteenth century end at the tip of the toe and may be wider than the actual foot.

Scale Armour
Scale armour consists of many small scales attached to a backing material of either leather or cloth. It is similar to lamellar armour but distinguished by the presence of the backing material. The two common types used in Medieval Europe were the brigandine and the coat of plates.

Spaulders
Spaulders are armored plates worn on the upper arms and shoulders in a suit of plate armour. Developed during

the Middle Ages, the use of spaulders declined during the Renaissance along with the use of plate armour. Unlike pauldrons, spaulders do not cover the arm holes when worn with a cuirass. Instead, the gaps may be covered by besagews or simply left bare, exposing the mail beneath.

Tassets
Tassets are a piece of plate armour designed to protect the upper legs. They take the form of separate plates hanging from the breastplate or faulds. They may be made from a single piece or segmented. Tassets were mainly used in the Middle Ages by knights.

Vambrace
Vambraces (French language avant-bras, sometimes known as lower cannons in the Middle Ages) are "tubular" or "gutter" defences for the forearm, developed first in the ancient world by the Romans, but only formally named during the early 14th century, as part of a suit of plate armour. They were made of either leather, sometimes reinforced with longitudinal strips of hardened hide or metal (a crafting method named "splinted armour"), or from a single piece of worked steel and worn with other pieces of armour. Vambraces are generally called forearm guards, with or without separate couters.